

## East Falls Past--Childhood Amusements

*The Fallser*, August 2008, by Wendy Moody

Our last two columns have focused on the memories of Robert Connolly, who spent his early years in East Falls. Now 85 and living in Cape May, Mr. Connolly continues to share his vivid boyhood recollections, this month remembering ways the children amused themselves in the early 1930s:



- A childhood illness kept me from participating in any contact sports – during recess I watched the other kids have fun. All I could do was play half ball or wire ball – no running or jumping there – or hide ‘n seek.
- Half ball was played with as many as we could scratch up, usually on teams. Seems like Rosie Andrioli was always playing. We used a rubber pimple ball or tennis ball cut in half - bought for a nickel. A broomstick was the bat.
- We played along the garages on Cresson Street - one team in the field, one team batting. The rubber ball was tossed, never thrown, upside down so the large open cup floated to the batter. One swing only. A missed catch meant first base – the street was lined off for bases. If a hit went out by the coal yard, it might be a homer. All for a five cent ball. Not one of the kids was ever in trouble.
- We played wire ball with a soft rubber ball. Girls were invited. If only two played, the thrower was on the dirt side of the railroad tracks near Cresson Street, and the catcher was on Sunnyside Street in the outfield. The thrower would try to hit one of the wires overhead as he threw towards the Sunnyside catcher. If he hit the wire and the catcher did not catch the ball coming down, that was a man on first. If he caught the ball, that was one out. You only got three outs, but as long as you could hit the wire, the man on base advanced. We spent many evenings playing wire ball.
- Sometimes the fielder would miss the ball and it would roll down the corner sewer. Dilemma. “No problem” said Johnny B., who was bigger than all of us. “We’ll get Dominic to get it.” Johnny took Dominic by the feet and lowered him head-first into the sewer. Dominic grabbed the ball, sopping wet, and Johnny pulled him out. On with the game...
- We played all kinds of simple games – hopscotch, pitch bottle caps, marbles, Simon Says. On Friday nights the fireworks from Woodside Park could be seen. On Saturdays, the boys talked baseball while the girls scrubbed the marble steps with cleanser. Some had skates, some chalked the sidewalks, some played jacks.

- The library was a nice place to visit, very bright and clean. We could stay and read or take some books home. And we could hold hands under the big tables without being seen.
- I remember Hurley's Ice House on Frederick and Eveline. We kids would hide nearby, hoping to get a sliver of chipped ice as the ice man made large blocks into small ones. If it wasn't trying to catch the ice in the summertime, it was trying to chew the black tar we found in the cracks of the streets – wonder why we didn't die of something...